

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4003
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
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AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 0098

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PEPR, PBOR, NS, GY

SUBJECT: WHICH WAY FOR SURINAM-GUYANA RELATIONS?

1. SINCE SURINAM GOVERNMENT (GOS) ANNOUNCED IN EARLY JANUARY IT WAS NOT RENEWING LICENSES HELD BY GUYANESE FOR FISHING IN THE CORANTIJN RIVER, NEW ELEMENTS HAVE BEEN INJECTED IN THE PSYCHOLOGICAL ATMOSPHERE AFFECTING GOS DECISIONS. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE OF THE THREE DUTCH-LANGUAGE DAILY NEWSPAPERS WHICH PREVIOUSLY CALLED UPON THE GOS TO REVIEW SERIOUSLY THE QUESTION OF GUYANESE LICENSES IN THE CORANTIJN HAS NOW REVERSED ITSELF AND IS CALLING THE GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES, NOT JUST ON FISHING LICENSES BUT ON THE WHOLE RANGE OF

SURINAM-GUYANA RELATIONS, SHORT-SIGHTED. OTHERS HAVE ECHOED THE THEME THAT POOR GUYANESE FISHERMEN ARE BEING MADE THE VICTIMS OF A MISGUIDED POLICY, ONE OF THE RESULTS OF WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY BEEN TO CREATE A SHORTAGE OF FISH IN
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SURINAM'S NICKERIE DISTRICT (WHICH BORDERS THE CORANTIJN) BECAUSE FEW IF ANY SURINAMERS ARE ENGAGED IN FISHING.

2. MEANWHILE, SPECULATION CONTINUES THAT GOS MAY BE CONSIDERING SOME KIND OF OVERTURE TO THE GUYANESE TO SORT OUT COMMON PROBLEMS, FOR EXAMPLE ADMINISTRATION OF 200-MILE ZONES AND GUYANESE WORKERS LOOKING FOR EMPLOYMENT

IN SURINAM, AND EVEN PERHAPS DISCUSSION OF THE LONG-SIMMERING BORDER DISPUTE WITH GUYANA IN SURINAM'S SOUTHWEST. A BORDER COMMISSION SET UP MORE THAN TEN YEARS AGO HAS NOT MET IN RECENT YEARS, BUT THEORETICALLY COULD BE RESURRECTED TO DISCUSS OUTSTANDING ISSUES. AN ARGUMENT THAT WORLD BANK CONSIDERATION OF SURINAM'S PLANNED KABALEBO HYDROELECTRIC SCHEME IN WESTERN SURINAM COULD BE ADVERSELY AFFECTED IF GUYANA DOES NOT INDICATE ITS NON-OBJECTION TO THE PROPOSAL IS ALSO FUELING THE APPARENTLY INTENSIFIED DEBATE.

3. THE GUYANESE EMBASSY HERE HAS FOR THE MOST PART KEPT A LOW PROFILE SINCE THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE GOS MEASURES EARLIER THIS MONTH, WITH AN OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN QUOTED AS SAYING THE TWO COUNTRIES ENJOY GOOD RELATIONS. IF THE FORCES PRESSING FOR ACCOMMODATION WIN OUT IN PARAMARIBO, AND IF THE GUYANESE GOVERNMENT IS PREPARED FOR FRIENDLY DISCUSSIONS, IT IS JUST POSSIBLE THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES WILL FINALLY SEE AN OPPORTUNITY TO NORMALIZE THEIR RELATIONS. NONETHELESS, THE ISSUES ARE COMPLICATED AND EMOTION-LADEN AND WE WOULD NOT FORECAST ANY QUICK RESOLUTION OF OUTSTANDING DIFFERENCES.

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